

Information Warfare

An Air Force Policy for the Role of Public Affairs

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THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIRPOWER STUDIES,
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA, FOR COMPLETION OF
GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS, ACADEMIC YEAR 1996-97.

Air University Press
Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

June 1996

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 074-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE 6/1/1996	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Research Paper 6/1/1996	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Information Warfare: An Air Force Policy for the Role of Public Affairs			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Crumm, Robin K.				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Air University Press Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 Words) The successful conduct of military operations in the Information Age demands new strategies,new tactics,and new ways of thinking.It also raises important moral and ethical issues regarding the relationship between the military,the media,and the American public.Because exploitation of the information spec - trum cannot be confined to a battle area,it is logical to assume the integration of Information Warfare (IW)into warfighting doctrine will target the strategic center of gravity encompassed by public opinion –our ’s and our enemy ’s.The military ’s use or misuse of information in psychological or deception operations, under the guise of IW,could undermine the American public ’s trust in the US military institution.Although IW is still in its infancy,Air Force policy concern - ing the role of Public Affairs (PA)in IW has not been sufficiently examined This				
14. SUBJECT TERMS IATAC Collection, information warfare			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 52	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UNLIMITED	

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Abstract

The successful conduct of military operations in the Information Age demands new strategies, new tactics, and new ways of thinking. It also raises important moral and ethical issues regarding the relationship between the military, the media, and the American public. Because exploitation of the information spectrum cannot be confined to a battle area, it is logical to assume the integration of Information Warfare (IW) into warfighting doctrine will target the strategic center of gravity encompassed by public opinion—our’s and our enemy’s. The military’s use or misuse of information in psychological or deception operations, under the guise of IW, could undermine the American public’s trust in the US military institution. Although IW is still in its infancy, Air Force policy concerning the role of Public Affairs (PA) in IW has not been sufficiently examined. This paper explores the relationship between IW and PA and reveals a direct link through the role of propaganda in each. A historical analysis of propaganda in past wars yields lessons which can be applied to formulating PA policy on IW today. In light of the evidence, three possible options emerge regarding the possible IW roles PA might adopt. Option One—a “Hands Off” policy—seeks to avoid any association with IW and represents the current PA approach. Option Two upholds the primacy of truth but acknowledges PA must take an active role in IW. Option Three suggests PA abandon its policy to tell the truth and actively engage in all IW activities, including disinformation. This paper finds Option Two as the logical role for PA in today’s environment and concludes with several recommendations to implement the policy.

About the Author

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The people thinking hardest about warfare in the future know that some of the most important combat of tomorrow will take place on the media battlefield.

—Alvin and Heidi Toffler

Millions of people in America and around the world sat mesmerized before their television sets in 1991 watching the first, real-time video coverage of the Persian Gulf War. The public obviously enjoyed the technology that enabled them to be armchair warriors, but few realized the significance of witnessing the first “war-in-a-glass-bottle.”¹ However, its value was not lost on our Iraqi adversaries. News broadcasts as an immediate intelligence source fired the imagination of the enemy and the Iraqi Rocket Force began watching Cable News Network (CNN) to home-in their Scud volleys into Israel and Saudi Arabia.²

On the coalition side, live news broadcasts of both the bombed Al Firdos bunker and disturbing images from the highway of death brought about strategic decisions affecting the prosecution of the war. According to Gen Colin L. Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “The whole world witnessed on television as victims were hauled from the smoking rubble . . . the bunker strike underscored the need to start the combined air/ground offensive and end the war.”³ President George W. Bush also observed, “We’re starting to pick up some undesirable public and political baggage with all those scenes of carnage (on the highway of death). Why not end it?”⁴

Global, real-time news proved to have a profound effect on military planning and operations on both sides before and during the Gulf War. Communications satellite technology would make it virtually impossible for the military to monitor or control the flow of news from the battlefield. Uncensored information made available to the American public would be just as accessible to allies and adversaries alike via the international news networks.

For the second time in 30 years, information and communication technology would revolutionize the way wars are fought. The first was during Vietnam when television brought the war into America’s living rooms each evening and emphasized the importance of public support. Operation Desert Storm took it two steps further. War could now be broadcast in the world’s living room and in real time. If Vietnam did not prove television had become an instrument of war, Desert Storm certainly did.

With military news analysts predicting strategies for the air/ground campaign based on “inside” sources, and news correspondents standing on rooftops visually depicting Scud volleys hitting their mark or holed-up

in a hotel room in the heart of enemy territory, the media provided a wealth of intelligence data for both sides. Col Alan Campen, in an essay titled *Information, Truth and War*, notes that "Television reporters have become a critical instrument in a totally new kind of warfare. Satellite technology . . . can transform reporters from dispassionate observers to unwitting, even unwilling, but nonetheless direct participants."⁵

What are the implications for the US armed forces? Clearly, operations security is of grave concern. However, the military must also reevaluate the paradigm that seeks to balance the responsibility for US national security with that of the need to inform the American public in light of Information Age realities. While the dynamics of the paradigm may have changed, the symbiotic nature of national security and public support remains the same—without public support the military has no mission. According to the *1996 National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*:

Our engagement abroad requires the active, sustained bipartisan support of the American people and the US Congress. Of all the elements contained in this strategy, none is more important than this: our Administration is committed to explaining our security interests and objectives to the nation; to seeking the broadest possible public and congressional support for our security programs and investments; and to exerting our leadership in the world in a manner that reflects our best national values and protects the security of this great and good nation.⁶

It is not just the media who are capitalizing on communication technologies. The military also has wide-range plans to transform the way it fights using information technology; the Air Force calls it Information Warfare (IW). Yet, current research has not thoroughly examined how public support might be affected by this exploitation of information, especially since it cannot be confined to the battlefield.

Certainly international television became the verbal battleground of Saddam Hussein and President George W. Bush during Desert Storm. It also contributed significantly to the deception plan that focused Hussein on an impending, but fictitious amphibious assault while coalition troops executed the "left hook." The two examples illustrate how the media can, and are being used to engage the enemy in an information war. At risk is the democratic idea which says the American public has a right to know the truth. Where should the moral and ethical lines be drawn?

Within the military, Public Affairs (PA) should be the agency most concerned with this phenomenon since, by directive, it is the "sole agent at the Seat of Government for the release of official DOD information for dissemination through any form of public information media."⁷ Unfortunately, PA has demonstrated a reluctance to explore the emerging IW technologies because of institutional and psychological barriers. Institutionally, the Department of Defense (DOD) is limited by law in its authority over the media and in the use of "propaganda," an important tool in IW. The psychological barrier may be even more important because propaganda is culturally a dirty word to Americans, although its true meaning has become distorted by his-

tory. Alvin and Heidi Toffler emphasize the aversion Americans—especially the press—have toward military propagandists: “While the military knows that putting the right ‘spin’ on war news can, at times, be as important as devastating an enemy’s tanks—nobody loves a ‘spin doctor’ who wears khaki. Especially the American press.”⁸

While PA, as an organization, vehemently denies that it “manages the news,” the American press has accused the military of managing the news in every war since the United States became a sovereign nation. However, information technology changes the dynamics of the military-media relationship and demands that PA reconsider the way it accomplishes its mission of garnering public support. The military claims it withholds information, or uses censorship in wartime only to protect the security of planned or on-going operations. But with the speed and autonomy with which the media disseminated news from the battlefield in the Gulf War, complete censorship is now impossible. Is it necessary, then, for PA to manage the news in other ways? And if so, is there a role for PA in IW? That is the theoretical question of this research paper. According to Col Terry Tyrrell, special assistant to the director of Air Force of PA, no one is participating in a discussion about what the PA role should be in the emerging IW environment.⁹

Also at issue is the international nature of news that ensures that the information the American public receives will also be the same as that available to our adversary. This is a significant issue since psychological operations (PSYOP) and military deception in the past have been able to target the adversary population with propaganda, and even lies without also affecting our own public.

Finally, and most importantly, the enemy will be using the same real-time media to persuade or even coerce the American public and our allies into sympathizing with his cause. Hussein tried it with propaganda of a bombed out “baby milk factory” and a personal interview with CNN’s Peter Arnett. Americans saw through the crude attempt to win their sympathies, but our next adversary may not be so inelegant. Strong public support and confidence in the military’s activities are an essential element of the national will that will be required to see a nation through a war. Countering subtle (or even not-so-subtle) enemy propaganda without a coherent PA strategy is a formula for disaster. Current PA strategy is inadequate in its historical analysis of how propaganda and use of the media as a medium have influenced past wars and how future wars on the “media battlefield” should be conducted.

Following this introductory chapter, chapter 2 will define IW and identify the PA link. Chapter 3 will examine how the military and the PA organization in particular, have garnered public support with varying degrees of success throughout its major wars. Those lessons gleaned from the historical analysis will be applied in assessing the possible roles which PA could take in its approach to IW in chapter 4. The alternatives represent data points on a spectrum ranging from no PA role in IW at all to a total embrace of the IW

mission, without regard to current PA organizational structure and regulatory limitations. The analysis should reveal a logical approach for the role of PA in IW. The concluding chapter will apply the prescribed role by making several recommendations for implementation.

Armed with an informed strategy PA should be able to accomplish its mission of gaining and maintaining public support through a media who, according to the Tofflers, "will be a prime weapon for Third Wave combatants in both the wars and anti-wars of the future."¹⁰

Notes

1. James E. Haywood et al., *The Impact of Media Information on Enemy Effectiveness: A Model for Conflict* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air Command and Staff College, 1994), 1.
2. Ibid., 26.
3. Colin L. Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 513.
4. Ibid., 521.
5. Alan D. Campen, "Information, Truth and War," *The First Information War*, ed. Alan D. Campen (Fairfax, Va.: AFCEA International Press, 1992), 86.
6. *The National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Washington, D.C.: White House, February 1996), 45.
7. Department of Defense Directive no. 5122.5, *Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office [GPO], 2 December 1993), 4.
8. Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1993), 165. Note: The Tofflers have suffered some critical reviews of their work, especially concerning their selective historical perspective. While they will be used extensively throughout this paper, the focus will be on their vision of the future that is unmatched in current literature.
9. Col John T. Tyrrell, special assistant to the director of Public Affairs, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, telephone interview, 29 March 1996.
10. Toffler, 175.

Chapter 2

Defining Information Warfare and Identifying the Public Affairs Link

The successful conduct of military operations in IW demands new ways of thinking. The military is responding to the challenge of this new era with innovative strategies and tactics for fighting wars. There is considerable debate among the services and other government organizations about what this novel form of warfare should be called or how it should be defined. However, most military professionals agree that the technological innovations of how we sense, record, process and transmit information has opened up additional vistas for conducting war. While the definitions may seem vague because information embraces so many disparate activities, the Air Force calls the effort IW, and defines it as “any action to deny, exploit, corrupt or destroy the enemy’s information and its functions; protecting ourselves against those actions; and exploiting our own military information functions.”¹

IW encompasses six means: psychological operations, electronic warfare, military deception, physical destruction, security measures, and information attack. PA, in its mission to inform the American people, conducts IW when it uses security measures defined as denying the enemy knowledge of our military capabilities and intentions. Specifically, PA is directly involved in operations security (OPSEC), which often includes censorship of information in war. But this paper will show PA can also be directly or indirectly, and knowingly or unknowingly, involved in several of the other means of conducting IW, in particular PSYOP and military deception. PSYOP uses information to affect the enemy’s reasoning and targets the will to fight. Military deception attempts to mislead the enemy about our capabilities or intentions and creates an alternate reality upon which the adversary bases his decisions.²

Most aspects of IW are not new. Targeting the enemy’s communications, deception of all sorts, and PSYOP—propaganda in particular—have been practiced since the dawn of organized warfare. Other aspects, such as IW against civilian computer systems, called “hacker war,” are emerging as a result of new information age technologies. However, PSYOP promises to be the most transformed by the emerging global information infrastructure.³ Since the use of information influences others is often considered coercive, it is this aspect that constitutes most IW activities.

Protecting against enemy attack on US information is a key aspect of the IW definition. According to the Air Force’s *Cornerstones of Information Warfare*, “Information warfare is any action to protect our information functions, regardless of the means.”⁴ Since our adversary often uses

propaganda to attack our national will, it would follow that countering enemy propaganda would be an IW function. Yet, countering enemy propaganda by informing and educating the American citizenry, which serves to bolster national will, is not really addressed much in IW literature. Why? Informing and educating the American public is a PA responsibility and a tremendous sensitivity exists within the PA community against being associated with IW. “The fear is that PA might be accused of practicing IW in the form of propaganda on our own citizenry,” said Maj Matt Durham, director of PA for the Air Force Special Operations Command.⁵ Therefore, PA is not currently included under the IW umbrella, although the natural link between national will and the IW mission cannot be denied, and new information technologies may make the link unavoidable.

Twenty-one hundred years ago, Sun Tzu recognized “national unity . . . to be an essential requirement of victorious war.”⁶ For the military, “national unity” and public support for the military’s actions during war goes hand-in-hand, translating to national will. Today public support is recognized as a strategic center of gravity, but it took the French Revolution to change the paradigm.

Carl von Clausewitz referred to the nature of war as a “paradoxical trinity,”⁷ balanced by a combination of the public, government leadership and the military in a viable mutually supportive relationship. During his lifetime, Clausewitz witnessed a new era in warfare that evolved from eighteenth century monarchies where the nonmilitary population exerted only indirect influence on the conduct of war to one in which the citizens became conscripts and the entire nation suddenly had a vested interest. With the French Revolution, “The people became a participant in war; instead of governments and armies as heretofore, the full weight of the nation was thrown into the balance.”⁸ Figure 1 illustrates the concept of Clausewitz’s trinity.

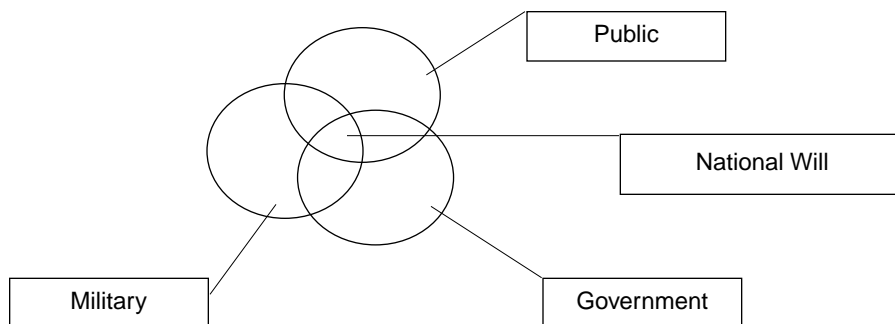


Figure 1. Clausewitz’s Trinity and National Will

The area common to all three forces is often debated, but this author believes it represents national will. The greater the synergy or balance among the three forces, the greater the national will. Information that can unite and balance the three forces is provided through the medium of media. Mass communication informs the people about the activities of the government and military. The result is a collective public support of the government leadership and the military organization to conduct the foreign affairs of the nation. On the other hand, our government leadership measures its continued existence and the military measures its ability to achieve its objectives based on public support. The degree to which the people, government and military, agree regarding a military endeavor represents the extent of national will. In war, the object is to change the national will of our enemy while ensuring American will remains strong. The model assumes information, with media as the primary means of transmission, is crucial to the formulation of national will. However, using the media as a medium to affect national will poses a vulnerability which information warriors can exploit.

Today's technology speeds the information flow among Clausewitz's three entities. New technology makes it quicker and easier to communicate to mass audiences and therefore the possibilities of affecting national will have also expanded. Therefore, PA's job of garnering public support for military endeavors is also becoming more complex. The greatest concern is the way public support is continuously being influenced by what appears to be a biased media. In fact, the Tofflers assert the media are fusing into an interactive, self-referencing system in which ideas, information, and images flow incestuously from one medium to another.⁹ According to the Tofflers, "A major new factor in information war results directly from the worldwide infosphere of television and broadcast news. Many people have begun to realize that governmental decisions are becoming increasingly reactive to a 'fictive' (not a whole, relevant or contextual truth) universe created by CNN and its various international competitors."¹⁰

Information Warfare and the CNN Factor

Haiti offers an excellent example of a government decision affected by CNN's fictive universe. General Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and part of a negotiating team in Haiti headed by President Jimmy Carter, told this story:

. . . then suddenly the door broke open and, Gen Biamby (Haiti's chief of staff of the army) came back in . . . he was livid. And he came right up to me and he said, "General, how would you feel if you were in my position? I now know what's happening. Look on CNN. Look at that television. All of the officials in Washington are condemning us, threatening us with invasion, talking about war, talking about killing. And you sit here talking about peace and reconciliation, and now I have just gotten a call from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and I know that the paratroopers are on the way." . . . And within the next hour, we had a deal.¹¹

The threat of paratroopers on the way, in combination with CNN's portrayal of American will to depose the leadership, obviously led to the rapid, successful departure of Raoul Cedras and his cronies. According to Colonel Tyrrell, special assistant to the Air Force PA director and one who took part in the planning for the Haiti invasion, the CNN effect was accidental. In fact, the White House PA office (for OPSEC reasons) asked and the networks agreed not to broadcast the departure of the paratroopers from Pope Air Force Base (AFB), South Carolina.¹² Ironically, the CNN reports Gen Phillip Biamby referred to were merely a replay of issues that aired on the Washington Sunday morning talk shows. While PA played an indirect IW role in this event by suppressing the information about the paratrooper's departure and supporting the Sunday morning talk shows with information and interviewees, the unintended IW effect they had demonstrates the role they could play in the future.

Public Affairs and Psychological Operations Roles Begin to Blur

Haiti also serves to illustrate the way communicating to a "global village" blurs the very distinct and separate ways the military has traditionally communicated with Americans and with the rest of the world. Communicating with the American public—a traditional PA mission—and the way the military communicates with foreign audiences—a mission of PSYOP—can no longer be neatly separated into two distinct categories. Garnering public support through interviews with the Secretary of Defense or chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Sunday morning talk shows (a PA mission) also helped subdue the will of Haiti's leadership to remain in power (a PSYOP mission). The symbiotic nature of the two missions demonstrates the increasing interrelationship between PSYOP and PA. The two organizations have fundamentally different target audiences—PA communicates to the American public, government (specifically Congress) and its own internal military audience—while PSYOP communicates to the same three types of audiences, except on the enemy side. However, they increasingly share the same medium, the international media, with which to communicate their messages. Figure 2 illustrates this relationship.

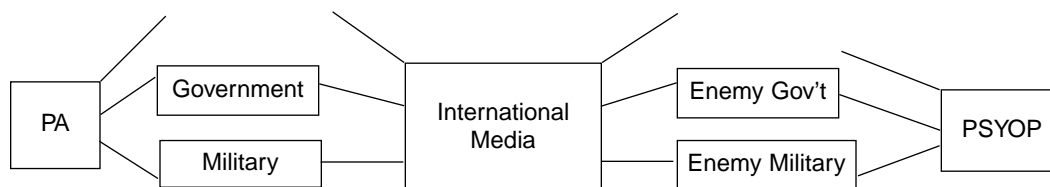


Figure 2. Psychological Operations and Public Affairs Relationship, Medium Sharing

Despite the increasingly shared medium in which the two exist, PSYOP avoids PA. Col Don Black, PA director for the Pacific Air Forces, explained the divergent relationship he encountered during Operation Vigilant Warrior: “The USIS Country Team wanted PSYOP to discuss its planning in the same room with PA, but PSYOP was reluctant. They (PSYOP) want to be involved in what we do, but they don’t want us involved in what they do.”¹³ However, in PA’s effort to keep the mission “untainted” from what it considers the somewhat more dubious truth or propaganda often used in PSYOP, PA also tries to avoid interacting with PSYOP. “It’s not just that PSYOP doesn’t want to talk to PA, but PA doesn’t want to talk to PSYOP,” said Colonel Tyrrell.¹⁴

Since PA is the “sole agent at the Seat of Government for the release of official DOD information for dissemination through any form of public information media,”¹⁵ PSYOP doctrine says it must use PA. The relationship is outlined in Joint Publication 3-53, *Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations*:

As open sources to foreign countries and the United States, PA channels can be used to disseminate international information. To maintain the credibility of military PA, care must be taken to protect against slanting or manipulating such PA channels. Within the United States, PA channels can be used to provide facts that will counter foreign propaganda, including disinformation, directed at the United States.¹⁶

It is interesting that there is so little desire for interaction between PSYOP and PA when the PSYOP doctrine specifically states PA channels will be used to disseminate international information. It is also noted that PA directives do not address the counterpropaganda mission when PSYOP doctrine indicates PA channels are used for that purpose. In fact, PA is quite explicit in denying any association with propaganda. By law, PA cannot hire public relations counsel or use appropriated funds for propaganda.¹⁷ Per DOD directives, “Propaganda has no place in Department of Defense Public Affairs programs.”¹⁸ Even the newest doctrine for Public Affairs in Joint Operations soon to be published, states:

The DOD’s obligation to provide the public with information on its major programs and operations may require detailed PA planning and coordination within DOD and with other government agencies. The sole purpose of such activity is to expedite the flow of information to the public: propaganda or publicity designed to sway or direct public opinion will not be included in DOD PA programs.¹⁹

According to the *Joint Task Force Commander’s Handbook for Peace Operations*, “In dealing with the media, the United States must speak with one voice, both politically and militarily.” Since PA avoids PSYOP in order to avoid being portrayed as a propagandist’s tool, it may be an impossible task without changing the PSYOP and PA paradigm to speak with one voice in today’s environment.

The same can be said for military deception. The joint doctrine for military deception specifically states that such operations will not intentionally target or mislead the US public, Congress, or the news media. Deception activities

potentially visible to the media or public must be coordinated with PA so the deception operation is not inadvertently revealed.²⁰ PA officers at central command (CENTCOM)-level were aware of the military's deception plan to execute the left hook rather than the amphibious assault during Desert Storm. Unfortunately, considerable criticism still exists among press professionals who allege the news media were deliberately deceived into covering the amphibious assault for IW purposes. Col Michael R. Gallagher, director of CENTCOM media relations during Desert Storm and now PA director for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, insists the allegations are not true and that PA was merely trying to help the media get action footage that the amphibious exercises amply provided.²¹ Gen H. Norman Schwarzkopf, former CENTCOM commander in chief, adds, "I will swear on a stack of Bibles that we never, ever deliberately manipulated the press, and we never, ever deliberately planted a false story."²²

"PA should be deeply involved in the strategic planning of IW so none of the traditional roles of PA are interfered with," said Colonel Gallagher. "My biggest worry is that PA will become such prima donnas (concerning IW) that the IW people won't coordinate with them." The colonel's fears are not spurious in light of fictitious scenarios like the one envisioned by Dr. George Stein, a professor at Air War College. His scenario illustrates the melding of military deception, PSYOP and PA using emerging mass communication capabilities. The scenario begins with enemy television stations picking up a simulated broadcast message from a commercial satellite in which their leadership urges all fighting to cease. Simultaneously, leaflet drops and loudspeaker broadcasts provide supporting details of how military units should disarm. Within minutes, CNN and other international networks are also reporting the message of surrender, however some networks are denouncing it as a Hollywood hoax. Is it real? It is almost impossible for the society under assault or the rest of the world to tell.²³

In a society under assault across its entire infosphere, it will become increasingly difficult for members of that society to verify internally the truth or accuracy of anything. Objective reasoning is threatened. The idea . . . may need to be considered with all the care given to the conduct of nuclear war, as the "end state" may not be bloodless surrender but total disruption of the targeted society.²⁴

Americans also witness the astounding broadcast and begin celebrating the return of their loved ones from abroad. How will Americans react when the truth is revealed and they learn their emotions have been taken on a roller coaster ride courtesy of the US military? Perhaps favorably if it brings a quick end to the war, but what if it does not? And how expensive is the victory if the cost is truth? Dr. Stein cautions, "Any discussion of information warfare . . . by the armed forces of the United States at the strategic level must occur in the context of the moral nature of communication in a pluralistic, secular, democratic society."²⁵

Scenarios like the one described pose grave concerns for PA professionals who believe the misuse of information for psychological effects under the guise of IW could undermine the public trust in the US military institution. Carolyn Piper, a PA professional in the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with more than 20 years of experience, concludes:

IW has no place in PA. In our democracy, the military organization exists only by the consent of the governed. If the institution lies or misleads the people, they cannot make informed decisions regarding the issues and we cease to be a democracy. Truth is essential to the credibility of the military organization and its continued existence.²⁶

It is this widespread philosophy that has led PA, so far, to take a hands-off approach regarding IW. At the Secretary of the Air Force level, PA plans deliberately avoid any discussion of the agency's role in IW but merely outlines the messages the Air Force intends to use to inform the public about IW activities within the Air Force.²⁷ PA professionals may also have a built-in fear of IW justified in light of a Freedom Forum Study released in the Fall of 1995. The survey revealed that six out of 10 military officers (from a pool of 935 individuals surveyed) believe, "Military leaders should be allowed to use the news media to deceive the enemy."²⁸

"That's disgusting," commented Colonel Gallagher, when asked his reaction to the survey results. The colonel indicated he has spoken to groups concerning PA's relationship with IW and his continued message is "Don't lie to the news media." Making an analogy to our nation's policy toward chemical weapons, he believes the military should have a similar policy flatly stating it will not lie to the media. Anyone caught lying should be court-martialed.²⁹

Exploitation of the information spectrum obviously has strategic implications far beyond the battle area that have not yet been imagined. From a PA perspective, a look at the historical evolution of IW, particularly propaganda, throughout the nation's wars may shed some light on the potential effect of today's high-tech version. Critics of IW, R. L. DiNardo and Daniel J. Hughes, acknowledge the fundamental link between IW and propaganda but assert today's high-tech propaganda is only an old form of propaganda used since the dawn of organized warfare. "It (propaganda) has always been designed to inspire confidence in one's own people and leaders and to alternatively ridicule, frighten, or demonize one's enemy."³⁰

Nonetheless, it is useful to take a look at propaganda from a historical prospective to glean lessons that may be applied to an appropriate PA strategy for IW. In the next chapter an examination of past wars reveals propaganda has been used consistently as the military's primary method of maintaining its support from the American people. What is more, there is strong evidence to suggest PA, despite its antipropaganda charter, has also used propaganda extensively "to earn public understanding, acceptance, and support of the Air Force mission."³¹ The following chapter proceeds from a definition of propaganda into the US historical accounts of its use.

Notes

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3. Martin C. Libicki, "What is Information Warfare," *Strategic Forum*, no. 28 (Institute for National Strategic Studies, May 1995), 4.
4. *Cornerstones*, 4.
5. Maj Matthew Durham, director of PA for Air Force Special Operations Command, interviewed by author, 15 May 1996.
6. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 39.
7. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 89. Note that the translation "paradoxical trinity" in the First Princeton Paperback Printing, 1989 of *On War* is different from the 1984 version where the translation reads "remarkable trinity."
8. *Ibid.*, 592.
9. Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1993), 170.
10. Dr. George J. Stein, "Information - Cyberwar - Netwar," *Battlefield of the Future, 21st Century Warfare Issues*, ed. Barry R. Schneider and Lawrence E. Grinter (Maxwell Air Force Base [AFB], Ala.: Air University Press, 1995), 156.
11. Gen Colin L. Powell, USAF, retired, speech untitled, presented to the Association of the United States Army Marshall Dinner at the Sheraton Washington Ballroom, 19 October 1994.
12. Col Terry Tyrrell, special assistant to the director, Secretary of the Air Force Office of PA, interviewed by author, 29 March 1996.
13. Col Don Black, director of PA, Pacific Air Forces, interviewed by author, 19 February 1996.
14. Tyrrell interview.
15. Department of Defense Directive no. 5122.5, *Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2 December 1993), 4.
16. Joint Publication (JP) 3-53, *Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 30 July 1993), 1-5.
17. Deficiency Appropriation Act of 1913, *Gillette Amendment*, cited in Air Force Regulation 190-1 (obsolete), *Air Force Public Affairs Program* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1 March 1989), 18.
18. *Ibid.*, Enclosure 2-1.
19. Draft copy of JP 1-07, *Doctrine for Public Affairs in Joint Operations* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1996), 26.
20. JP 3-58, *Joint Doctrine for Military Deception* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 6 June 1994), 1-4d.
21. Col Michael R. Gallagher, special assistant (PA) to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, interviewed by author, 20 May 1996.
22. Frank Aukofer and William P. Lawrence, *America's Team, The Odd Couple: A Report on the Relationship Between the Media and the Military* (Nashville, Tenn.: The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 1995), 154. Note: Authors interviewed General Schwarzkopf for their study on 23 January 1995.
23. Stein.
24. *Ibid.*, 158.
25. *Ibid.*, 159.
26. Carolyn Piper, public affairs officer, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, interviewed by author, 22 February 1996.

27. Maj Clem Gaines, secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs, staff officer responsible for IW activities within the Air Force and author of an AF/IW plan for PA, interviewed by author, 8 March 1996.
28. Aukofer and Lawrence, 29.
29. Gallagher interview.
30. R. L. DiNardo and Daniel J. Hughes, "Some Cautionary Thoughts on Information Warfare," *Airpower Journal* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 73.
31. Air Force Policy Directive no. 35-2, *Public Communications Programs* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 12 November 1993), 1.

Chapter 3

A Historical Perspective of Military Propaganda

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines propaganda as "ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause."¹ Philip M. Taylor, in *Munitions of the Mind*, offers this definition: "Propaganda is really no more than the communication of ideas designed to persuade people to think and behave in a desired way. In wartime that usually means getting them to fight or to support the fight."² Joint Pub 3-53, *Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations*, says it is "any form of communication in support of national objectives designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any group in order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly."³ These seemingly benign definitions are not shared by many Americans. In fact, propaganda bears such an inherently negative image, even PA through its directives categorically prohibits its use in any manner.

Most believe propaganda is composed only of lies; and conversely, what is true cannot be propaganda. Instead, propaganda can include any information from pure truth to pure deceit. Propaganda can be divided into three areas—white, gray, or black—based upon the acknowledgment of the source of propaganda and the accuracy of the information that is communicated. White propaganda comes from a source that is identified correctly and communicate accurate information. For example, what listeners hear on *Voice of America* could reasonably be considered accurate information (albeit biased toward democratic ideals). Gray's propaganda may or may not identify the source correctly and the accuracy of the information is uncertain. One example of this type of propaganda was a Russian television documentary on the war in Afghanistan that suggested the war had been started by outsiders and an individual, identified as a Turkish national, testified that he had been sent to carry out a mission for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Black propaganda gives a false source and lies, fabrications, and deceptions are deliberately spread. This type of propaganda has been refined to be called "disinformation."⁴

J. Fred MacDonald, a historian and editor of a series on the media and society, calls propaganda "an omnipresent, intrusive aspect of modern life . . . an integral part of all modern civilizations." He asserts that it plays a critical role in the preservation of order in authoritarian and democratic states alike. In authoritarian states, propaganda legitimizes and reinforces the leader's power while in democracies it serves to convince and manipulate. He maintains, "In the modern world, all mass communication is persuasive." MacDonald states that politicians are propagandists, but

so are clergymen exhorting Christian moral goals and TV cartoonists who perpetuate muscular heroes battling for justice. National anthems and pledges of allegiance to the flag are also propagandistic rituals that bind citizens to the purpose of the nation.⁵

MacDonald points out profound change occurred in the twentieth century when the common man came to power, establishing the need for new and relevant means of predictably controlling “mass man.” Therefore, he believes propaganda is a social adhesive. Mass man is educated and controlled through propaganda. His civic values are filtered through school boards, party committees, courts of law, and state legislatures that all serve to protect the orthodoxy. Communications media—through news and even entertainment—then frame the world to complement the historic national understanding the mass man has learned. MacDonald concludes propaganda has made sustained order possible in mass society. “Despite the controversy it has engendered, propaganda has been strategic to the survival of mass man and the civilization he now rules.”⁶

According to the Tofflers, the military has used six propaganda tools over and over again throughout the history of war—atrocities stories; hyperbolic inflation of the stakes involved in a war (civilians are told everything they hold dear is at risk); dehumanization of the opponent; polarization (“Those who aren’t with us, are against us”); divine sanction (incantatory phrases like “God Bless America”); and, propaganda that discredits the other side’s propaganda.⁷ Although today’s vision of IW using high-tech propaganda may be moving to a more sophisticated level, the key point is that these propaganda tools have worked for the United States since the Revolutionary War and continue to work today.

Unfortunately, the meaning of propaganda has been distorted by history from its original Latin meaning “to propagate” or “to sow.” The word originated in 1622 with Pope Gregory XV, who established a congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and used propaganda to initiate its ideology and oppose the Protestant Reformation.⁸ But the concept of propaganda has probably been around since the Paleolithic man began using his tools for warlike purposes. Cries and drum beats, for instance, were used to frighten the enemy and impress his friends.⁹

While it is not the intent of this paper to determine the “right” definition of propaganda, a working definition of propaganda is necessary to proceed with a historical examination of the term. For the purposes of this analysis, propaganda will be defined as methods of communication designed to persuade.

Revolutionary War

The American military’s use of propaganda can be traced back to the American Revolution, considered the first people’s war. As such, John Adams maintained it was a struggle for the “hearts and minds” of the peo-

ple even before the war began. Without the aid of the press and an effective propaganda campaign to explain setbacks and glorify victories (sometimes out of all proportion), the architects of America may never have reached their goals. Benjamin Franklin may lay claim to being the first American practitioner of black propaganda, writing a number of letters and documents under fake names to set other nations against the British government.¹⁰ George Washington also used the press for his own disinformation, spreading exaggerated reports of enemy casualties to keep the people from becoming discouraged. In 1777 he wrote, "It is in our interest, however much our characters may suffer by it, to make small numbers appear large."¹¹ The conclusion that can be drawn from this earliest example of the use of propaganda in war, demonstrates that our forefathers, responsible for the underpinnings of our democracy, used propaganda in all its forms.

Civil War

Growing literacy and the invention of the telegraph in the 1850s drew the US territories closer together and had profound implications for both the Union and Confederate armies in the Civil War. Telegraph lines greatly increased the speed with which the press could report on battles and troop movements. Journalists suddenly had the ability to describe military engagements as they took place—a development that blurred the line between press reports and intelligence.¹² Battlefield censorship alleviated the problem somewhat and also set the pattern for wartime censorship into the twentieth century. It is important to note the significance of censorship to propaganda. Censorship is a form of propaganda. It is as much about what is *not* said as overt expression.¹³

However, neither of the armies in the Civil War were prepared to counter the rumors and misinformation of the press. Official information lacked the color that newsmen could create. The public wanted news and the press intended to supply it, whether it existed or not.¹⁴ But, like Washington, generals were not beyond using the press to sow their own seeds of disinformation. Confederate Gen Albert Sidney Johnston hid the weaknesses of his Kentucky army by planting false reports on his strength and campaign strategies with the Southern press, knowing they would be parroted in the North, which is indeed what happened.¹⁵

Improvisation characterized the PA function in the field as there was no official PA organization. Each commander had his own policy for handling the press. Politically oriented generals cultivated reporters while generals like William T. Sherman questioned the Union government's decision to allow newsmen to accompany armies. Gen Ulysses Grant, on the other hand, recognized good relations with the media as essential to maintaining communications between the military and American people that went a long way toward quieting public concern that the war would never end.¹⁶

Conclusions about the Civil War from a propaganda perspective demonstrate that censorship can be an effective propaganda tool. Even then, the press agencies had an incestuous relationship among themselves as they do today and General Johnston, an enterprising general, exploited that vulnerability with disinformation. Sherman, however, learned that without an effective propaganda campaign of his own, support for the cause went to the generals who had the media savvy to know how to use the press to their own advantage. Civil War propaganda from both sides demonstrated that although the United States of America considers itself one mass society, propaganda does not necessarily play a unifying role.

Spanish–American War

Reporters continued to be nothing short of a nuisance in the eyes of military leaders as the United States entered the Spanish–American War. William Randolph Hearst pioneered “yellow journalism”¹⁷ and jingoistic slogans like “Remember the Maine.”¹⁸ It did not help that the war itself was a public relations disaster. The press recognized the United States was unprepared for large-scale military operations and did not hesitate to report it. In the years that followed, the Army began to grapple with the public relations prerequisites for achieving a higher level of defense preparedness. In 1907, the Army hired a retired Army officer to handle public relations in order to help sell a long-range plan of expansion and improvement to remedy its wartime unpreparedness.¹⁹

Oddly enough, Air Force PA came of age about this time, many years before the Air Force department was formed in 1947. The “Air Force’s” first news release announced the creation on 1 August 1907 of an Aeronautical Division in the Office of the Army Chief Signal Officer. The release was written by an officer in charge of the division.²⁰

Early legislation restricting government public affairs activities appeared in the Gillette Amendment to the Deficiency Appropriation Act of 1913, specifically forbidding the spending of appropriated funds to hire “publicity experts” without the expressed approval of Congress. Later legislation further defined these restrictions to prohibit the use of appropriated funds for “publicity or propaganda purposes” designed to influence the direction of legislation pending before Congress, with the exception of presentations made directly to that legislative body.²¹

It was not until the spring of 1916 that the Army appointed the first true PA officer, Maj Douglas MacArthur, to deal with the newspapermen who were covering the activities of Pancho Villa in Mexico and the troops who were gearing up for possible military intervention in Europe. In fact, Major MacArthur is credited by historian R. Ernest Dupuy with overcoming the American public’s reluctance to accept the Selective Service Act of 1917—PA’s first propaganda effort.²²

World War I

World War I provided the context for how the word propaganda acquired the unsavory connotation it has today. At the outset, the British organized a secret war propaganda bureau to conduct a highly delicate campaign to secure American sympathies. The Germans also exhorted the Americans to join their side with heavy-handed propaganda tactics. The British, on the other hand, targeted influential Americans and the media rather than trying to appeal to the population at large. While it cannot be said that British propaganda only got the United States into the war, it certainly helped in persuading President Woodrow Wilson, who had run on a “Keep America out of the War” ticket, into entering the conflict on the Allied side.²³

British propaganda also had a profound effect on the enemy. Adolf Hitler, then a German soldier, recalled:

In the year 1915, the enemy started his propaganda among our soldiers. From 1916 it steadily became more intensive and at the beginning of 1918, it had swollen into a storm cloud. One could now see the effects of this gradual seduction. Our soldiers learned to think the way the enemy wanted them to think.²⁴

Later, Hitler devoted two chapters in *Mein Kampf* in admiration of the British propaganda campaign, specifying the finer points of timing, cumulative effects and repetition, which he himself would later use. But the Germans used British propaganda as an excuse for their defeat—the German army did not fail but was betrayed from within—a theme used later to “prove” a Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy.²⁵

When the United States entered World War I, an internal propaganda effort touched citizens in every aspect of their lives. President Wilson appointed George Creel to head the committee on public information (CPI), which consisted of the secretaries of state and the secretaries for the Army and Navy. Creel, a close friend of Wilson, urged the president to create a government agency to coordinate “[n]ot propaganda as the Germans defined it, but propaganda in the true sense of the word, meaning the ‘propagation of faith.’”²⁶ The public’s perspective of propaganda was understood at this time as dishonest communication employed in underhanded campaigns by a foreign enemy. The idea that communication industries had introduced a pervasive social propaganda had not yet become a public issue.²⁷

American war reporting fell into the patterns of propaganda already prevalent in Europe. President Wilson reasoned that the outcome of the war depended on the people’s will to sacrifice and persist. The CPI was essential to strengthen national determination. As such, it evolved into a mammoth propaganda organization, reaching into every part of the nation, and came to maintain officers in every neutral and Allied country. It issued a daily newspaper, operated a press service that fed information to the news media, produced films and foreign language publications, and enlisted a corps of 75,000 patriotic speakers. Its organs stressed the supposed barbarity of the German armies and the justice of the Allied cause.

Wilson himself contributed forcefully to the effort by appealing in his speeches to American idealism. The war thus became in the eyes of many Americans an effort to end all wars and a crusade to ensure the worldwide triumph of democracy.²⁸

Within this optimistic framework, two darker themes lurked—the condemnation of Germany and Austria for alleged war atrocities and encouragement of citizens to act as vigilantes against disloyal citizens. These themes drew heavy postwar criticism. Whereas most Americans had accepted wartime atrocity tales as gospel, the discovery after the war that these stories were for the most part lies, showed falsehood could gain the aura of truth when presented by a governmental bureau that presided over all channels of public communication.²⁹

Germany's propaganda was inadequate from the outset. Poorly organized and coordinated, the German Press Bureau had the dual role of media relations and maintenance of morale at home and among the troops. Unlike the British who had separate departments for each function, the German propaganda machine was overburdened and diluted. Therefore, it concentrated on war news and neglected morale. German attempts at counterpropaganda therefore came too late in the war to make a difference in German morale.³⁰

Propaganda conclusions from World War I point to the continued problem of hate-inspired propaganda that does not die after the return to peace. Incidentally, the coalition in Desert Storm may have broken that mold somewhat when the allies purposely avoided such propaganda against the Iraqi people, although there were the usual after effects following the vilification of Saddam Hussein who remained in office.

The lesson of disinformation against one's own Allies was also first felt in World War I and would spill over in its effect to World War II. By the early 1920s, propaganda analysis evolved from the World War I critiques of communications. Concerns that democracy was in peril from these new methods of persuasion became the dominant perspective throughout the 20s and early 30s. Wartime US military propagandist, Walter Lippmann wrote of how authorities were able to manipulate the news in ways supportive of official policies. He charged modern propaganda had permanently changed the relationship of a self-governing people to their government.³¹

As for the lessons of censorship during World War I, the Allies prided themselves on their democratic principles, which allowed more plentiful news and more freedom of restraint than that of the enemy. However, the chief American censor for the US Army in Europe expressed the belief that he had served as "a public liar to keep up the spirit of the armies and peoples of our side."³² Once again, propaganda to manipulate opinion, in the form of censorship, left a lingering distaste for omitting details that were not of value to the enemy but could, if released, damage morale.

Finally, the Germans' failure to create an adequate propaganda campaign may present the most important lesson from World War I. In today's world, PA is also stretched thin trying to accommodate the thousands of

press representatives on the battlefield. The effort to feed the hungry “news” monster takes precedence over all else in the PA arena. The German example clearly demonstrates that maintaining morale and counter-propaganda should be the priority. The American military has yet to learn this lesson.

Nevertheless, the Army took away some PA lessons from World War I and established a press relations section that became the central coordinator to inform the public of all Army activities. By 1930, the technical and administrative branches of the Army had PA officers on staff charged with writing speeches, acting as press liaison, and improving relations with the community. On the eve of World War II, the PA branch successfully divorced itself from the G-2 Intelligence directorate citing the fact that secrecy hampered efforts to keep the public and Congress informed.³³

World War II: The War against Germany

The ability of the United States to broadcast news electronically had a profound effect on propaganda in World War II. The newfound technology would enable propagandists on all sides to dwarf the efforts of all other conflicts, including World War I. This total war, where bombers attacked civilian populations as well as military targets, led to unprecedented cooperation between the government and the media to inform the public.³⁴

The most potent source of white propaganda in Britain was the British Broadcasting Company (BBC). It not only provided propaganda news and entertainment, but overt and covert broadcasting. BBC even provided for the air defense of Great Britain. It entered the war with the philosophy, “No permanent propaganda policy can in the modern world be based upon untruthfulness.” Eventually, the “truth,” just not the whole truth, became axiomatic.³⁵

The BBC occupied a special place in the world of mass communication. Its august reputation, built wholly on telling the truth and not as a propaganda arm of the government, made it the most-listened to radio service in the world. However, for all its voluntary assistance given the Allied cause, it was still used as an unconscious agent of the overall deception plan called Bodyguard which focused the Germans away from a Normandy invasion.³⁶

With the entry of America into the war, two separate propaganda organizations were set up—the office of strategic services handled black propaganda, and the office of war information worked white propaganda. Following the British lead and a similar abhorrence for propaganda after World War I, the American military developed their “Strategy of Truth” as a fundamental principle of propaganda.³⁷

Like generals in every war, Gen George C. Marshall, US Army Chief of Staff, had to learn how to deal with the press. By the time of the 1944 Normandy invasion, he met with the press regularly to appeal for under-

standing of the Army's problems and argue on behalf of the controversial George Patton.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower considered relations with the press essential to the process of forging support for the homefront and unity among the European Allies. As such, he made public affairs a command priority. Where General MacArthur kept reporters at arm's length in the Pacific, Eisenhower turned the press into "quasi-members" of his staff. So complete did he woo the reporters to his cause, when he requested they suppress the story of General Patton slapping a soldier, they banned the news so completely it took three months to reach papers in the United States.³⁸

Relations with the press during World War II were positive despite censorship. However, criticisms emerged after the hostilities that the press had been lulled so completely by censors that the American public was isolated from war's realities. The final consensus, though, generally credited both government and media with accurate, honest reporting.³⁹

The Nazi propaganda campaign demonstrates the similarities and difference between democratic and totalitarian propaganda. Like Hitler, Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels greatly admired the Allied propaganda campaign in World War I. Nazi propaganda activities were carefully concealed from public view with Goebbels heading up the apparatus with the title Nazi Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. No such office had existed before. The aim of Nazi propaganda was to achieve the identification of the party with the state. Centralization of propaganda activities required the elimination of every alternative source of information. By 1934, the Nazi party controlled 430 newspapers directly and indirectly controlled all the German press.⁴⁰ Control of information in a totalitarian state is paramount to its survival.

Among the Nazi documents salvaged by Americans in 1945, were close to 6,800 pages of script purportedly dictated by Goebbels in a diary that covers 1942-43.⁴¹ Most significant were 19 principles that reflected Goebbels' propaganda strategy and tactics. However distasteful the concept, many of the principles are profound and have direct application to propaganda methods used today.

Among the principles was the importance of truth; however, for Goebbels it was not based on morality but expediency. Truth should be used as often as possible; otherwise the enemy or the facts themselves might expose falsehood and the credibility of one's own output would suffer. He also had no second thoughts about censorship. "News policy is a weapon of war; its purpose is to wage war and not give out information."⁴²

Goebbels often violated his own thoughtful, logical policies though. He wrote in his diary, "Propaganda to the homefront must prevent the raising of false hopes which can be blasted by future events."⁴³ Yet, he summoned the press, including foreign reporters, to announce Moscow's imminent fall in October 1941.

In the end, Goebbels was forced to recognize six situations that could not be appreciably affected by propaganda: hunger and sex; discomfort and death caused by air raids; ability to increase industrial production; and, religious impulses. Also, overt opposition required forceful action rather than clever words and Germany's unfavorable military situation became undeniable fact.⁴⁴

World War II: The War against Japan

Pearl Harbor was a tribute to the disinformation campaign the Japanese had conducted between 1939 and 1941. Japanese propaganda, or "Thought War" as they preferred to call it, used radio as its principal instrument. Because of the rivalry between the army and navy, both had their own propaganda organizations. Military domination of the government also meant all national propaganda was subject to the same control. The real triumph of Japanese propaganda was the fanaticism it had instilled in its warriors; ironically, that same propaganda lacked a clear philosophy concerning a "strategy of truth," which proved to be a major weakness. A Japanese writer observed, "Japan was hopelessly beaten in psychological warfare, not because of any particular adroitness on the part of the Allies, but because the Allies based their propaganda on truth—whereas Japan was unwilling to deal in truth, almost from the outset."⁴⁵ Col Tom Mahr, media advisor to Air University, confirms that the Japanese are still very sensitive to the lesson they learned about truth in World War II. During his tour in Japan as the Fifth Air Force PA, he was taken aside and given a history lesson when he tried to discuss proactive PA messages with his Japanese counterparts. They were concerned that proactive messages insinuated twisting the truth to make a positive story and they would have none of it.⁴⁶

World War II propaganda lessons suffer from an inability to separate the ferocity with which a total war is fought under conditions of unconditional surrender and the effect of the most comprehensive propaganda campaigns the world has ever witnessed. Was it successful propaganda that bolstered the national will or the threat to national survival that made propaganda so effective? It is impossible to tell, but certainly the symbiotic nature of propaganda and national will led Japan and Germany's populace to remain loyal to the end.

Propaganda would continue to provoke the evil image of Hitler and Goebbels long after World War II. However, the military still had much to learn about propaganda. It would take the Korean conflict and Vietnam to convince the military that total war does not share the same rules as limited war, especially when it comes to communicating with the American public. They would relearn Clausewitz's dictum:

The first, the supreme, the most far reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war

on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions.⁴⁷

Korea and Vietnam

Bolstered by two victories involving total war, the US military was not prepared for the credibility crisis they made for themselves in the limited wars that followed in Korea and Vietnam. Frankly, the military expected that they would continue to enjoy a collaborative role with the media. But General MacArthur handled the press situation badly with the setbacks that accompanied China's entry into the war. According to Lt Gen Bernard Trainor (US Army retired), "What started to turn the press against the war was actually a reemergence of government disinformation . . . the Allied side was putting out bum dope and withholding information."⁴⁸

As military successes became losses, breaches of security by the press supposedly forced MacArthur to invoke censorship; but it amounted to a propaganda tool to control the bad news. MacArthur's military PA officers provoked the press by extending censorship beyond the areas having to do with military security. In several cases, information needlessly withheld by the military was later revealed in newspaper exposes that damaged Army credibility.⁴⁹ Although censorship may have reduced the number of security violations, it failed to stop them completely. For example, on 18 June 1951, *Newsweek* published a map detailing the order of battle for the entire US Eighth Army.⁵⁰

In stark contrast, censorship was virtually nonexistent in Vietnam. From a propaganda perspective, however, the conflict crept up on the American people. The first phase from 1941 to 1963 received little attention due to America's minor role. From 1963 to 1967 there was considerable escalation of military involvement and corresponding media attention, though generally uncensored.⁵¹

Peter Braestrup writes in *Big Story*, that the military and media shared a common problem in describing an unconventional war in conventional terms Americans could understand—a problem never solved. "By late 1967, Saigon newsmen felt that Gen William Westmoreland (commander of Military Assistance Command in Vietnam)—under pressure from Washington—were [*sic*] gilding the lily," hence the name of the daily press briefings, the "Five O'Clock Follies."⁵²

Technology was also an important consideration, for television now brought war into the homes of Americans every night on the evening news and the impact of images on the psyche of the American public took communicators by surprise. PA professionals simply had no experience in countering the superficial storylines that accompanied the shocking combat footage. Without a supportive press to tell the whole story with all its complexities, public support was doomed. Americans were left with only a

vague notion of what Vietnam was all about, but a clear vision of the horrors of war.

When President Lyndon Johnson launched a public relations campaign requiring that Westmoreland and military PA officers shore up public support, the military found itself squarely in the middle of a political arena from which it had previously remained aloof. In fact, it required an order by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff requiring PA to explain the war in every way possible for the military to become fully immersed in selling the war.⁵³ Gen Michael Dugan, former AF Chief of Staff, retired, observes: "A ten-year war on remote foreign soil will almost always be a bad story in a liberal democracy. The easiest way for defense establishments to manage the media is to generate a compelling story."⁵⁴ It is important to note that General Dugan supports "managing" the media, a significantly different view from what many of today's PA professionals hold.

General Trainor is less kind in his assessment of the military's errors in Korea and Vietnam: "The supportive press at the outset of the (Korean) war became very sour and very critical of the military and most of all the government. Why? . . . because the government resorted to lies. . . . Out-right lies." In Vietnam, the general believes once the Tet offensive was launched by an enemy supposedly "on his last legs," the media turned against the war because of the lying and sensed there were no objectives in a war of mounting casualties.⁵⁵

While World War I and World War II gave propaganda a bad name, Korea and Vietnam did nothing to improve the situation. Lessons from Korea and Vietnam include: PA professionals in Korea and Vietnam were "ham handed" in their propaganda methods, the most obvious reason is that military PA professionals do not receive any formal training about how to communicate persuasively, that is propaganda. Censorship began in the middle of the war as in Korea or a proactive propaganda campaign had begun years into the war as in Vietnam, significantly lowers the probability of success. Even the Germans learned this in World War I with their counterpropaganda campaign well into the war. While Goebbels was evil, his principles of propaganda were sound and stated as follows: (1) truth is best; to do otherwise risks exposure of the lie and loss of credibility, (2) do not oversell success on the homefront, (3) propaganda is ineffective when an unfavorable military situation becomes undeniable fact, and (4) war is an extension of politics as recognized first by Clausewitz. The military cannot separate itself from this reality but must be prepared to fight by whatever means required by the leadership—even a propaganda campaign.

Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf War

The whole military propaganda environment changed with Vietnam. PA attitudes as well as technology would put censorship back in primary

focus. Whether it was a backlash from Vietnam or just failure to think through the plan, the exclusion of the press from the American invasion of Grenada is touted as an all time low in contemporary PA. General Trainor explained the military's decision, "The military said that operations in the age of instant communications had to be very secret, and it could not afford to have the press tipping them off—a variation of the old argument of operational security used from the time of the Civil War."⁵⁶

In the short-term view, the propaganda tool of total censorship of the press was a success and the American public approved. In the long view, the military lost credibility when its own initial reports contradicted the information discovered later by the media. The American public was left with the impression the military lied.⁵⁷

The propaganda lesson is that, perhaps for the first time, the military recognized it needed the media in order to tell its story. Excluding the press from Urgent Fury in Grenada bred suspicion concerning the true extent of the military's success. While the media may also have erred in its initial reports from the island, the press lends a third-party objectivity to an event. First-hand battlefield reports from the media serve to legitimize what might otherwise be construed as the exaggeration of warriors in the flush of victory.

Operation Just Cause, in Panama, profited just slightly from the lessons of Grenada. A commission, headed by Gen Winant Sidle, investigated the Urgent Fury debacle and provided six recommendations to enhance the military-media relationship—one of the most significant recommendations included establishment of a Washington-based press pool. "The pool" was designed as a compromise between the desire for media access and the military's desire to somehow accommodate the huge numbers of press expected. Just Cause served as a test-case for the implementation of the Sidle Commission recommendations, particularly the pool. While it quelled accusation of total censorship of the battlefield as in Grenada, the national media pool could not cover military actions until the second day of the operation.⁵⁸ "Meanwhile, journalists by the score who had nothing to do with the pool were flying in on commercial airliners from . . . every other place in the world to cover the war on the spot," said General Trainor.

If more than 800 journalists present during the Panama Operation seemed overwhelming, it was only a fraction of the mass of journalists who arrived to cover the Gulf War. More than 1,600 reporters had to be accommodated during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, above and beyond the members of the press pool. The future promises more of the same as indicated by the press on the beach at the Marine landing in Somalia. PA's efforts to frame the story to maximize support will clash with the need to accommodate huge numbers of reporters clamoring for more news and better access to the battlefield.

However, communications technology such as suitcase-sized earth terminals added a new and unexpected dimension to IW in the Gulf, perhaps

even exposing a void in military security policy. Satellite technology may make censorship obsolete.⁵⁹ With an international media who have no particular loyalty to one side, it will be virtually impossible to impose censorship rules on an international press. Access to the battlefield may no longer be an issue when the media can get the information they want without having to rely on PA to direct them to the action.

Fighting the war real-time on CNN and other international media also means the enemy can speak directly and instantaneously to the American public. During Desert Storm, Hussein used CNN reporters in Baghdad to wage his propaganda campaign. Suddenly, PA faced the dilemma of engaging in a counterpropaganda campaign against American reporters controlled by the enemy, reporting instant news on the enemy homefront. The so-called baby milk factory bombed by coalition aircraft serves as a classic example of the type of propaganda PA had to scramble to refute. A timely counterpropaganda campaign in a world of instantaneous news poses one of the bigger challenges for PA in future wars.

Summary

This cursory historical perspective demonstrates the wealth of lessons that can be gained from America's many years of propaganda experience. The following lessons stand out the clearest: The American military has used the media since the Revolutionary War to communicate propaganda in all forms, to maintain American support, and confuse the enemy. The press, despite its inherent weaknesses, continues to be the best available medium to tell the military story—our propaganda. PA “controls” the media predominantly through censorship, a passive form of IW. However, the American public tolerates censorship best when military security is obviously at stake and least when censorship merely protects morale. The media and the American public accept stricter censorship rules in total war than limited war. Counterpropaganda campaigns must be implemented quickly to be successful. Finally, but most importantly, the value of truth in propaganda cannot be overemphasized. The authors of our Constitution could be considered the worst offenders of this basic precept of truth. However, the propaganda experiences early in this century made the word “truth” synonymous with the word “democracy” in the American culture.

Some things never change, however. The military's OPSEC problem of balancing access for the press with military secrecy remains as serious a concern today as it was two hundred years ago. As technology increasingly allows more immediate media access to the battlefield, this issue promises to remain a constant.

Above all, PA needs to take a harder look at the mission and resolve the dichotomy of what PA does in word—no propaganda—with what it does in

deed—white propaganda. Only then will PA be able to critically examine its role in IW.

Notes

1. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1977), s.v. "Propaganda."
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3. Joint Publication 3-53, *Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations*, 30 July 1993, GL-5.
4. Victoria O'Donnell and Garth J. Jowett, "Propaganda as a Form of Communication," in *Propaganda: A Pluralistic Perspective*, ed. Ted J. Smith (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 55-56.
5. Smith, 23.
6. *Ibid.*, 32-34.
7. Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War; Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1993), 67-69.
8. Randall L. Bytwerk, "Western and Totalitarian Views of Propaganda," in *Propaganda: A Pluralistic Perspective*, ed. Ted J. Smith III (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 54.
9. Taylor, 19.
10. *Ibid.*, 142.
11. James Thomas Flexnor, *George Washington: The Forge of Experience* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965), 255.
12. Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 20-21.
13. Taylor, 216.
14. William M. Hammond, "The Army and Public Affairs: A Glance Back," *Newsmen & National Defense: Is Conflict Inevitable?* ed. Lloyd J. Matthews (New Jersey: Brassey's Inc., 1991), 4-5.
15. Alan D. Campen, *The First Information War* (Fairfax, Va.: AFCEA International Press, 1992), 89.
16. Knightley, 27.
17. Yellow journalism refers to news stories that are often blatantly false. Hearst was purported to have told his newsman to provide the pictures and he would provide the war.
18. Taylor, 174-75.
19. Hammond, 6.
20. Air Force Regulation 190-1(obsolete), *Air Force Public Affairs Program*, 1 March 1989, 19.
21. *Ibid.*, 18.
22. Hammond, 6-7.
23. Taylor, 183.
24. *Ibid.*, 187.
25. *Ibid.*, 188.
26. Robert Jackall and Janice M. Hirota, "America's First Propaganda Ministry," in *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 138.
27. J. Michael Sproule, "Social Responses to Twentieth-Century Propaganda," in *Propaganda: A Pluralistic Perspective*, ed. Ted J. Smith (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 8.
28. William Hammond, "Propaganda: World War I and II," *The Dictionary of American History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 7.
29. Sproule, 9.
30. Taylor, 191.

31. Sproule, 10.
32. Hammond, 8.
33. Ibid., 9.
34. Taylor, 214.
35. Ibid., 222.
36. Anthony Cave Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 320.
37. Taylor, 232.
38. Hammond, 11.
39. Ibid.
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41. Leonard W. Doob, "Goebbels' Principles of Propaganda," in *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 190.
42. Ibid., 203.
43. Ibid., 210.
44. Ibid., 214-15.
45. Taylor, 240.
46. Col Tom Mahr, media advisor for Air University, interviewed by author, Maxwell AFB, Ala., 1 April 1996.
47. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 88.
48. Lt Gen Bernard E. Trainor, "The Military-Media Boxing Match," transcript from Chester W. Nimitz Memorial Lectures in National Security Affairs, *Military Perspectives on Humanitarian Intervention and Military-Media Relations* (Berkeley, Calif.: Regents of the University of California, 1995), 36.
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50. B. C. Mossman, "Command and Press Relationships in the Korean Conflict" (1967), Center of Military History Study, Center of Military History files cited in Hammond, 12.
51. Taylor, 269.
52. Peter Braestrup, *Big Story* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983), 16-17.
53. Hammond, 15.
54. Clinton D. Esarey, "The Media and the U.S. Army: You Don't Always Get What You Want; You May Just Get What You Need" (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: School of Advanced Military Studies, May 1994), 6. Note: Esarey refers to a speech made by Gen Michael J. Dugan, retired, former AF chief of staff, "Defense and the Media in Time of Limited Conflict," at the International Conference in Brisbane, Australia, 3-5 April 1991.
55. Trainor, 36-37.
56. Ibid., 39.
57. Esarey, 11-13.
58. Ibid., 16-21.
59. Campen, 88.

Chapter 4

Public Affairs Options/Implications for Information Warfare

From the historical analysis of chapter 3, it is apparent that PA and the IW community can learn a great deal from the propaganda experiences of past wars in formulating an appropriate policy for the PA role in IW. The evidence points to three possible paths which PA could pursue.

Three Public Affairs Path Options

Option One would proceed on the path which PA is currently heading—a hands-off approach to IW. Under the guidance of the current PA directives denouncing propaganda, PA would maintain a strict policy of avoiding any association with IW planning or execution. Option Two suggests PA should acknowledge when it engages in white propaganda and take an active role in the IW planning process. This option would entail a new attitude toward propaganda, but would uphold the primacy of truth. Option Three would embrace all forms of propaganda, including disinformation. This third option would include a policy of using the media to deceive the enemy. Each option has several considerations that must be examined before arriving at a best possible option.

Option One: “Hands Off”

At this juncture, PA has chosen a hands-off approach to IW and that may be the easiest answer for now since Air Force doctrine on IW is still in draft. Since IW includes propaganda, PA has plausible deniability that it has a role in IW because its directives prohibit use of propaganda. There may be some wisdom in this wait-and-see approach since critics of IW suggest it may just be another fad and that IW advocates have merely twisted history to fit the theory.¹ Regardless, changing mass communications technology, whatever name is attached to it, has put the PA and PSYOP missions on a collision course. The fact that two traditionally separate audiences, the American and enemy publics, now share virtually the same communications medium cannot be denied.

Since PSYOP plans call for extensive use of propaganda and one of its major tools is the local and regional media, the incestuous relationship of the media guarantees that the PSYOP propaganda message can and will be boosted to the international media level, the realm of PA. How then can PA deny it does not “do” propaganda? In today’s global-media world, au-

diences cannot be effectively separated, when PSYOPs speaks from some remote village, the entire world hears its message. The key here is that PA represents the integrity of the entire military organization. PA cannot have its own policy against engaging in propaganda while the rest of the military ignores the restriction.

Marine Corps Lt Gen Anthony C. Zinni, commanding general of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and commander of United Shield in Somalia, emphasizes the importance of coordinating PSYOP with PA.

In United Shield the message to the Somalis, through leaflets and speakers, was that the world would not abandon them, and the Mogadishu port and airport would be closed for only four days. It was important to be consistent in press briefings for the media pool and international journalists. If the message to CNN was different from the leaflets distributed to the locals, a serious problem could have arisen.²

PA's hands-off approach to IW may not serve the military or the American public well. PA currently sees itself as the moral conscience of the military organization. PA director, Gen Ron Sconyers, states, "Above all, the PA professional embodies ethical decision making. . . . A 'hybrid' an insider when it comes to understanding how the unit operates but who can also look at the organization as an outsider when necessary."³

However, the American public does not necessarily view PA in such altruistic light. Philip M. Taylor introduces his book, *Munitions of the Mind* with the statement that the war propagandists were back in business in Desert Storm.

The manner in which they (war propagandists) were able to secure a monopoly over the way in which the outside world perceived the war against Saddam Hussein was all the more remarkable in light of the existence of a pluralistic global media which should have provided diversity of coverage and reporting instead of what many saw as a monochromatic and misleading video-game war.⁴

While there is validity in having a moral conscience in an organization, the danger is that within the military, PA's are viewed as "truth police" who are better avoided. PA's own avoidance of PSYOP and military deception plans leaves itself vulnerable to manipulation and circumvention by other organizations within the military. It is no secret that, especially during military operations, the media are being fed information from "unofficial" sources within the military.

According to retired Gen Perry Smith, a CNN military analyst: I had a number of sources in the Pentagon. Two were absolutely essential. Both held key positions and had direct access to senior decision makers . . . they filled me in on the thinking about the concerns of top officials with whom they had close contact. To identify them would violate an unspoken trust and could jeopardize their careers.⁵

Obviously, General Smith circumvented PA to get the "facts," and his sources in the Pentagon also ignored the DOD directive for releasing official military information. He and several other former military individuals set a precedence for news organizations to hire retirees and other experienced military persons who have "inside" sources from whom they draw

information that would not ordinarily be available through PA channels. These unofficial sources can engage in all shades of propaganda, including disinformation. Since they wear the military uniform, their manipulation of the media could be perceived as the philosophy of the entire military organization.

A statistic revealed in the Freedom Forum Study bears this out. When the news media were given the statement, "Military personnel are honest when dealing the news media" only 43 percent agreed. Motives for maintaining secrecy also illustrated a distrust of military people on the part of the media. Ninety-nine percent of the media said they believed that the military often, or sometimes, kept things secret because they did not want to look bad. Eighty-nine percent said the military often or sometimes maintained secrecy because of possible embarrassment over waste and inefficiency.⁶

When 60 percent of the military population goes so far as to advocate deceiving the enemy through the American media as indicated in the Freedom Forum Study, PA may be losing the battle to educate the military organization as to the value of "truth," the primary lesson brought out in the chapter 3 examination of propaganda history.

Col Ron Rand, PA director at Air Combat Command, believes the results of the Freedom Forum may be valid. He asserts that there have been PA leaders who have gone out planning meetings of all types, and asked for a show of hands as to who thought using the media to lie to the enemy was legal, moral, and ethical. Consistently, more than one-half raised their hands. When told that PA has a policy not to engage in lies, the answer was "then we just won't tell you." Yet, when Colonel Rand asked an IW briefer, at the worldwide PA conference in March 1995, if he was aware there was widespread intent to knowingly spread misleading information, the briefer answered "that's not part of IW."⁷

Colonel Rand said, "The bottomline is that there are a lot of things being done (with regard to disinformation or black propaganda) without the approval of senior leadership."⁸ The thoughts of the Air Force chief of staff appeared to illustrate the dichotomy between senior leadership's views and the large percentage of military people.

Our institutional reputation depends upon our ability to create and foster a positive image of the Air Force—an image that reflects performance and values, noble values underpinned by unwavering integrity. This image must be so compelling that public confidence in our people, our weapons systems, our organization, and our ability to perform our mission is absolutely unquestionable. We must consider our corporate image as a priceless resource—as valuable as our people and aircraft. . . .⁹

The chief of staff's statement on Air Force PA policy also implies that building an "image" requires a certain amount of orchestration. General Sconyers goes so far as to say, "In a chaotic and communications-rich world, the goal of all communication strategies must be that of *creating knowledge* (author's italics)—not just imparting data or facts, but pre-

senting information in a way that is so compelling and interesting that people can understand it and make use of it.”¹⁰

Did the Air Force chief of staff and the director of PA break the Gordian knot against propaganda while the PA institution lags behind? Perhaps. General Sconyers acknowledges that senior leaders and PA need to develop a different perspective on the PA mission:

Air Force leaders must identify and abandon outdated rules and fundamental assumptions that once defined PA operations. These leaders cannot look at PA the same way today that they did yesterday. The Air Force must go back to the beginning and invent a better way, concentrating on what its future policies should be and adapting goals and strategies to produce the desired results in the face of rapidly changing environments.¹¹

Given the evidence, PA cannot afford to continue to deceive itself for long in the belief Option One is the best answer. Martin Van Creveld said, “. . . now as ever, such communities as refuse to look facts in the face and fight for their existence will, in all probability, cease to exist.”¹² Option Two and Three are at least more inventive approaches to the traditional PA role.

Option Two: Public Affairs Conducts Information Warfare, Upholding Primacy of Truth

Over the expanse of five continents throughout the coming years an endless struggle is going to be pursued between violence and friendly persuasion. . . . Henceforth, the only honorable course will be to stake everything on a formidable gamble—that words are more powerful than munitions.

—Albert Camus

An Option Two role for PA would entail proactive management of the news. PA does this now, but it does not admit it, and therefore lacks a coherent, aggressive strategy. This option includes an expanded role in IW, particularly in protecting our own citizenry against enemy propaganda and affecting the enemy’s reasoning through use of the media. However, Option Two stops short of planting lies in the media for enemy consumption.

This option better supports the National Security Strategy of “. . . seeking the broadest possible public and congressional support for our security programs . . .” by acknowledging a more proactive role in countering enemy propaganda and actually persuading the public to think in a desired way.

Colonel Rand, believes PA “absolutely” has a role in IW “as long as there is an innate understanding that it is fact-based propaganda and fact-based counter-propaganda.” He believes PA can even help in the tactical deception arena, both passively and actively, but PAs have to be aware of what is happening. The passive method includes not bringing a particular topic up or simply responding, “I don’t have a comment” in regard to a specific question. Actively, a PA can bring up a true fact like, “we’re de-

ploying two destroyers to the Med,” which might cause the enemy to look in the wrong direction. But he strongly believes there is never a necessity to lie to the media to deceive the enemy. “I have never been put in a situation where I had to use a cover story. I’ve always gone to the leadership and suggested a better way to go about it.”¹³

The colonel’s thoughts illustrate the need to make PA directives reflect IW realities. First, PA needs to include the mission of countering enemy propaganda in its directives. It also needs to either define propaganda (and what aspect of propaganda PA will not do—lies) or eliminate it from its directives so that the PA organization doesn’t totally discount its use. Two references to propaganda in the following Air Force policy directive could simply be eliminated without changing its meaning. Parentheses surround the words proposed for deletion:

To maintain credibility of internal and external communications, it is Air Force policy that a free flow of general, DOD, Department of the Air Force, command, and unit information will be made available by commanders at all levels in a timely, responsive manner, consistent with security and policy, without censorship (or propaganda). (Propaganda), disinformation, or activities intended to misinform, mislead, or deny otherwise releasable information will not be practiced in any PA program.¹⁴

The directive still says PA will provide a free flow of information and it will not lie. The danger is that the media, the American public, or even Congress could have concerns about the legal and moral intentions of the military if the word is dropped. However, the law says the military cannot hire public relations counsel or use appropriated funds for propaganda, it does not say that the military cannot engage in propaganda.

The former chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, General Powell, believes that one of the most important keys to military success is a mature understanding of public relations and politics, and how to make them work in the military’s favor. “Once you’ve got all the forces moving and everything’s being taken care of by the commanders, turn your attention to television because you can win the battle or lose the war if you don’t handle the story right.”¹⁵ General Zinni believes, “Whoever controls information wins,” and in today’s wars of low-intensity conflict media management is most important because of the difficulty of explaining to the American public where our national vital interests lie.¹⁶ The truth is not incompatible with doing this.

“The military only recently is learning to overcome its fear of the media in order to manipulate them like a politician,” acknowledges General Trainor, an ABC military analyst. “But officials do practice spin control (managing the way information is presented). Is it legitimate? Let me give you a qualified yes.” General Trainor believes the use of spin control should be situation dependent. If the spin control is designed to disinform your enemy, then there is some legitimacy, but the presumption is that disinformation is not exercised. In the Gulf War, because the Iraqis were deaf, dumb, blind, and depending on CNN for intelligence analysis, “a lit-

tle bit of spin control was warranted, but the target was the Iraqis not the American public.”¹⁷

Colonel Mahr, Air University Media Advisor, believes PA can play a part in controlling the news but, “The key is the intent of the message over time.” In other words, isolated cases may warrant spin control of the news to affect the enemy but it should not be practiced on any sort of routine basis. The overall message should be the military only seeks to inform and educate the American public.¹⁸ Philip M. Taylor, writes in *Munitions of the Mind*, “. . . it is the intention behind propaganda that needs scrutiny, not just the propaganda itself. It is intention, that has caused and prolonged wars. It is intention that can prevent them.”¹⁹

A paper presented in 1992 by Lt Col Marc Felman, a student at the School of Advanced Airpower Studies (SAAS), coined the term “media spin” for the considerations that the military must give to the way combat operations are portrayed in the news media.²⁰ The author went so far as to suggest it as a new principle of war. His use of the word “spin” is admirable in light of the current PA antipropaganda mindset. But the level of concern some PA leaders have at even the hint of controlling the media environment cannot be underestimated. For example, one senior Department of Defense PA professional tore Felman’s paper in half after merely reading the title of the paper, “The Military/Media Clash and the New Principle of War: Media Spin.”²¹

It is this author’s opinion that Colonel Felman’s paper did not go far enough. He stopped short, suggesting only that the military “consider” the news media’s impact. His media spin paper merely implies actions taken by the news media upon the military, but the principles of war are meant to be active not passive measures taken to achieve victory. Asserting the primacy of truth, the military should add a tenth principle of war to acknowledge the media’s impact, defining it in action words like—“News Management”—use mass communication channels to influence American support and convey a message of strength of will to the enemy.

The Air Force PA director also talks about military communication and public opinion as a principle of war and PA as the primary weapon.

In today’s world of instant information, aggressive internal and external communication strategies and considered public opinion are *principles* of war and peace. Through solid PA research, planning, execution, and evaluation, the Air Force must create and foster a compelling image of its mission, so compelling that confidence in the institution is unwavering even during singular events that may momentarily tarnish the corporate image (emphasis added).²²

Another research endeavor accomplished at the ACSC in 1994 supports an Option Two-type approach as the appropriate role for PA in IW. This paper logically asserts that the immediacy of news reporting makes it impossible for the military to maintain OPSEC by denying information to the media. The solution is to decrease the enemy’s military effectiveness with information overload. They suggest a collaborative role between military

and media where the news networks are flooded with so much information that the enemy cannot discern valid intelligence data.²³

While this paper shows creative thought regarding IW possibilities for PA, it does not reflect reality in its assumption of a cooperative role between military and media or its effect on American public support for the war. If the military and media confuse the enemy with the overload of information, would the American public not also find it difficult to determine a coherent thought on which to base its support for the conflict?

Possibly the greatest detractor from Option Two is the huge task of reeducating PA professionals to accept a role for PA in IW. PA professionals have been raised to respond to media queries, publish internal newspapers and conduct civic leader tours. Formal PA training does not include best methods for influencing people through mass communications for fear of treading into propaganda waters. In addition, more training is required to broaden PA's perspective on using information not just to inform Americans but also influence the enemy.

One of the logical restraints against engaging PA in this increased IW role is the numbers of PA professionals versus the thousands of media guaranteed to show up at the next war. How can PA do its current mission and take a more aggressive IW stand? It cannot, but it could best serve both masters by creating a PA cell of experts in the IW organization who could coordinate with the PSYOP and military deception planners, and serve as advisors and educators to PA officers in the field with IW issues.

Given the weak interaction between PA and PSYOP, considerable effort would be necessary to make these two organizations parts of a team. A shared training program would be a start. Combined training and other methods to inspire cooperation would force multiply both the PA and PSYOP missions. Enhanced understanding of both missions would allow PA to maintain its function as the military's moral conscience without being labeled truth police.

Another disadvantage of PA embarking into the world of IW propaganda has to do with the fundamental assumption that propaganda is successful. As one critic points out, the use of high-tech propaganda as a major theme of some IW advocates has some inherent weaknesses. "The ultimate problem with even the slickest propaganda is that it does not always work, and even when it does, its effectiveness is limited. . . . As such, it has always occupied a supplemental place in war, but that is all."²⁴

While the authors are correct in their sweeping statement that propaganda does not always work, neither can they prove any weapon in the military's inventory works everytime, nor is it expected. Just as the allied coalition could not ignore the Iraqi Scuds because of their psychological rather than their military effect, propaganda's effect on Americans cannot be ignored. Option Two requires PA to confront the challenges of propaganda head on—American national will depends on it.

Option Three: Public Affairs Engages in Information Warfare, Including Disinformation

We are bred up to feel it a disgrace ever to succeed by falsehood . . . we will keep hammering along with the conviction that honesty is the best policy, and that truth always wins in the long run. These pretty little sentiments do well for a child's copy book, but a man who acts on them had better sheathe his sword forever.

—*The Soldier's Handbook*, 1869

Sun Tzu said, “All warfare is based on deception.”²⁵ Indeed, military deception is one of the important pillars of IW and a cardinal virtue in war. Paul Fussell, in the *Norton Book of Modern War*, brings this age-old concept into contemporary context: “From the days of the Trojan horse, war has necessitated ruses, espionage, deceptions, misrepresentations, and other elements of fiction, and a modern war can be distinguished from others by the extent, depth, sophistication, and technological expertise of these operations.”²⁶ The issue here is not whether the military should practice deception in war, but whether or not Americans and our allies should be victims of the military's deception. It is unfortunate that as the technological sophistication of deception increases, it has not yet translated into a lesser need to target our own population with disinformation to achieve our goals.

The Option Three role for PA, that of engaging in disinformation with the media to accomplish a military deception operation, was not even a consideration among any of the PA officials interviewed. In fact, the suggestion is repugnant to their concept of integrity. Colonel Rand sums it up, “There are those in the military who believe integrity doesn't count in times of war.” To counter that mentality he believes PA professionals need two things, “confidence in the integrity of their answers” to media questions and “the moral courage to say ‘NO’ if the answer is a lie.”²⁷

How can some IW advocates determine lies and deceit via the mass media as a legitimate, necessary way to mislead the enemy, while PA officials hold such strong opposing views? The issue comes down to which is more ethical; lying to the American public in order to save lives, or protecting truth, the very fabric of our freedom, which could incur additional loss of life? The arguments are awesome in scope and cannot be addressed here with the respect they are due, but perhaps there is no need.

There is a short answer. For every lie used on the American public in the history of war, there were alternatives to that lie. Lying to the media is not a necessary and sufficient condition for the success of a deception campaign. To say that using the media will save lives and therefore, is moral, is a specious argument because there are other ways to accomplish the objective. For those who might counter that in war there is no logical limit to the pursuit of victory, Clausewitz's said, “Since war is not an act

of senseless passion but is controlled by its political object, the value of this object must determine the sacrifices to be made for its magnitude and also in duration.²⁸ He referred specifically to real war versus ideal war. Since our National Security Strategy dictates that our engagement abroad “reflects our best national values”²⁹ it would seem that truth, as it regards our American public, has a rightful place.

All the PA officers interviewed for this effort confirm they have never (knowingly) lied to the press to further the goals of a deception plan. In fact, PA’s truth policy could enhance the success of a deception. For example, Desert Storm serves as a recent example of a deception plan that had an effective alternative to lying to the press. PA did not lie to the press to get them focused on a Marine amphibious landing instead of the left hook. The amphibious exercises were legitimate activities in preparation for Desert Storm. News hungry reporters willingly covered the story in their effort to show the American people what was happening. The effect caused the enemy to look another way, but can the military be faulted for not showing the media their intentions to execute a left hook? Such an assumption borders on the ridiculous. General Schwarzkopf elaborated:

In the very early days of the war, the deception planners came down with their deception plan. One of the principle proposals was that we would plant false stories in the newspapers. Then the enemy, reading these newspapers, would be led to believe them. But a decision made in Washington, which I supported, was that’s not the way we do things in the United States of America. We don’t lie to the press. We do not put false stories in the newspaper to manipulate the enemy. Now I will tell you, quite candidly, when the reporters’ focus was on the Marines going out on amphibious operations . . . I was delighted that the press was doing that.³⁰

The example also provides an interesting testimonial to the mounting evidence that military people plan to lie to the media. It would appear some military planners intended to lie to the press and yet such a plan made it to the Washington level before it was disapproved.

PA faces a crisis so great that even the existence of the PA organization may be threatened. Ultimately, PA may be forced into Option Three, lying to the press, and its organization absorbed into PSYOPs under the IW umbrella. The military organization may already be out-of-control in terms of what constitutes an official policy on IW. Colonel Rand sees a lack of structure, policy development, and centralized control of IW activities within the Air Force. As one corrective measure, he believes the Air Force needs “a policy statement that says we will not use official spokespeople of the Air Force to lie to the public.”

Already, IW advocates circumvent PA channels to communicate directly with the media more and more. As mentioned in examples heretofore, CNN’s General Smith touts the vital contribution of his “inside sources” and Colonel Rand’s informal planning meeting surveys demonstrate the intent to spread misleading information unofficially with the promise, “we just won’t tell you.” PA cannot be responsible for the “truth” of these unofficial messages.

In addition, the small PA organization may no longer be able to manage the huge numbers of media who come to play in today's wars. Former General Schwarzkopf explained the media logistics problems encountered in Desert Storm, ". . . if you've got 2,060 people, all of whom feel that they can go anywhere on the battlefield they want to go, and you are responsible for their housing, their feeding, their transportation, and their communication, it is just totally unmanageable."³¹ In such an environment, how does PA prioritize its responsibilities to work media relations with an increasing responsibility in the IW realm? Perhaps this issue also bears on PA's unwillingness to become involved in IW.

PA bases its ability to garner public support on its integrity and credibility for speaking the truth. When PA no longer knows what is true or is powerless to influence the IW warriors against lying to the press, the entire military organization is at risk.

Option Three offers what the PA professional would consider an unpalatable solution to the PA role in IW. Yet, this option may be the ultimate IW weapon. The PA organization provides a lucrative cover since it is so stalwart in its claims of only speaking the truth. Colonel Mahr illustrates the significance of the possibility by relating a conversation he had with an IW briefer at the March PA worldwide conference. The individual said, "The reason I tell you the truth is so that when I lie, you will believe me."³²

The comment is shocking, but the reality is that such a strategy is very short term in its scope. Major Durham, director of PA for Air Force Special Operations Command, comments, "When you try to use the media to deceive the enemy, it'll only work a couple of times. Operators tend to only take a short term view of it." PA's role in IW could become nothing more than a front for communicating lies through the media.

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30. Aukofer and Lawrence, 156. Gen H. Norman Schwarzkopf interviewed by author as part of Freedom Forum Study.
31. Ibid.
32. The quote is not attributed due to its sensitive nature, but was meant to serve as a warning to PA attendees at the Worldwide PA conference who were examining the implications of IW.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Since the 1996 Worldwide PA Conference in April, PA professionals have expressed a more focused desire to examine PA's future in an IW environment. It is too early to tell what PA's future role in IW will be, but considerable evidence points to what should not be PA's role.

A logical interpretation of the evidence does not support at least two of the approaches examined. Option One, a hands-off policy toward IW, and Option Three, which condones the use of lies in the press, do not reflect the current technological or psychological realities of our nation. Option Two suggests an increased role for PA in IW propaganda and the evidence strongly suggests the approach is both valid and feasible. Just exactly what that role could be is up to PA senior leadership who has the power to change the attitudes within their own organization and the tools to mold the views of the rest of the military into a coherent policy.

While this research endeavor will not go so far as to dictate a specific role for PA, there are several conclusions that can be drawn from the evidence that would help forge a logical role for PA as the IW doctrine within the Air Force evolves.

Conclusion One: PA cannot continue to take a head-in-the-sand approach to IW and expect that the PA organization will remain untouched by the ramifications of IW, particularly with regard to PSYOP or military deception plans. Even if PA takes no more of a role in IW than to stay attuned to the policies and proposals regarding PSYOP and military deception, PA will have more confidence in the integrity of the answers its spokespersons must feed the press. **Recommendation:** Host a joint conference of PA and PSYOP and other IW planners to discuss interrelationships in the changing world.

Conclusion Two: All PA's need to understand what IW is so that they can identify it when they see it and can make an intelligent assessment as to whether or not it falls within the bounds of PA responsibility and policy. **Recommendation:** Create a mandatory IW education program for all PA's.

Conclusion Three: Whatever role PA decides for itself in IW, PA's should have a thorough understanding of propaganda and its function in a democratic society. No formal or informal education exists within the PA community that defines propaganda beyond, "Do not do it." **Recommendation:** Introduce a propaganda ethics course at the Defense Information School (DINFOS) for all PA professionals.

Conclusion Four: Sufficient evidence exists to support the notion that military professionals do not support the PA policy condemning lies to the press. Since the PA policy is also the official policy of the Air Force, all military professionals should understand why the military condones the policy despite its seeming contradiction to military deception precepts. **Recommendation:** Air Force education campaign on the military-media relationship, including all professional military education levels.

Conclusion Five: Communications technology makes it impossible for PA to censor the press and the international media cannot be expected to conform to American press guidelines for OPSEC. Recommendation: PA adopt aggressive methods to lessen the impact of real-time reporting—specifically, reacting quicker with senior military spokespeople who can articulate the Air Force position convincingly.

Conclusion Six: Retired senior leaders will continue to be hired by media corporations as military analysts who will use “inside sources.” Recommendation: (1) Expand media training for a select group of generals who either hold a critical position or have the most potential for lending credibility to Air Force messages so the military has its own arsenal against media agendas gone wrong, and (2) Educate military professionals about DOD directive that charges PA with sole responsibility for release of official information. Then, rigorously investigate and punish “inside sources” for breaches of policy.

Conclusion Seven: As IW continues to evolve, PA needs to decide what it means by propaganda as written in the organization’s directives. Recommendation: Rewrite the directive to define propaganda or, if PA finds it may take on an increased role in propaganda, remove it completely. The directive would still identify disinformation as improper.

Conclusion Eight: Technology still requires mass communications to reach PA audiences, but new technologies may make it easier to target individuals and relieve the pressure on the military-media construct. Recommendation: Look at more sophisticated ways to reach niche audiences, through the internet for example, rather than relying on the mass appeal.

Conclusion Nine: The immediacies of today’s communications capabilities do not translate to a commensurate rapid crystallization of public opinion. In fact, first reports are usually untrue leading to increased confusion concerning the facts. The military cannot wait for public opinion to consolidate into a rational course of action. It must act per its political master and public opinion must follow. Therefore, the military must convince the masses that its intentions are legitimate and good and its actions are correct, in war and in peace. Recommendation: PA should channel and shape public opinion, using propaganda techniques short of disinformation, with the altruistic goal of bolstering national will to achieve victory in war.

Conclusion Ten: Although this paper has used the correct terminology “propaganda” throughout, the negative connotations the word provokes may prevent a logical analysis of the issues when evaluating the PA role in IW. Recommendation: Change the terminology to “news management” to remove some of the emotional baggage associated with the word “propaganda.”

PA endeavors to meet the needs of the military as professional communicators but they also have a higher authority, the American people, whom they ultimately serve. While these two PA responsibilities are not new, emerging IW doctrine threatens to put the two responsibilities on a collision course. PA must take an active, aggressive role in resolving these IW issues so that doctrine reflects the ideals inherent in the American democratic society and still meets national security objectives.

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